



SEATTLE PARKS  
AND RECREATION

## ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Winter 2006

# WALKING THE TALK

Note from Ken Bounds

### Utility Summit

At Seattle Parks and Recreation we are proud of the expanding services we provide our citizens. The properties and facilities we have acquired, renovated, and built in the last ten years have expanded the size of our indoor facilities by 45% (up to 611,000 square feet), and outdoor park spaces by 480 acres. These facilities do not come without a price. They often require that we consume more water, gas, electricity, and garbage and recycling services. And as everyone knows, the price we pay for utilities has been going up. That is why, on January 12, Seattle Parks Directors and managers met in a Utility Summit with members of our utilities and other City departments to talk about ways to reduce our utility costs and save resources across Parks.

Over the next few months, a Utility Conservation Committee will meet to develop a multi-year Utility Conservation Work Plan. With our partners, we will take a "big picture" look at Parks and where we can make significant investments and take advantage of new partnerships. We will also find ways to reduce consumption by working with all of our staff and work units.

We have been engaged in resource conservation at all levels of our organization, and Parks staff have made a significant difference in our conservation efforts to date by:

- ◆ Working in rooms with desk or area lights rather than overhead lights;
- ◆ Turning off computers when they leave for the day;
- ◆ Recycling paper and other materials; and
- ◆ Chipping tree limbs for use as mulch instead of taking them to the dump.

Our shops staff have also done great projects that reduce utility consumption while improving our properties. We have done good work; because we've done it, we know we can do more.

I look forward to seeing what more we can achieve together.

Ken Bounds, Superintendent

### Beach Staff Contribute to Cleaner Air

Senior Lead Worker Ted Baker loves the beach, and so do thousands of other area residents. But when Ted was assigned to lead the first Parks crew to monitor evening recreational fires at Alki beach, he had no way of knowing how successful his program would become. When he began in 2002, illegal fires (those that burn outside the provided rings) and the burning of illegal fuels, defined by state law as any fuel other than "clean, dry firewood," reached a level of concern for staff, area residents, and the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency. Today, through improved use of signage and public education materials, extinguishing fires at park closing

and as needed, and enhanced park maintenance efforts at both Alki and now Golden Gardens beaches, Ted and his staff have led the way in improving beach users' compliance with outdoor burning rules and regulations, which contributes to cleaner air and a cleaner beach.

How do we know? Recently, we compared beach fire data for 2003 and 2005. We found a 60% reduction in illegal fires and an 88% reduction in the burning of illegal fuel (21.3 tons down from 176 tons). These reductions represent 155 fewer tons of fuels burned on our beaches, which translates into 30% fewer emission into our airshed.

The presence of staff on these beaches at peak use times has enhanced user experience by ensuring cleaner beach sand and cleaner park

amenities such as picnic tables and shelters. A recent customer service survey at Golden Gardens Beach showed that beach users overwhelmingly rated the performance of our beach staff monitoring fires as "extremely" professional.

We would like to thank the many beach users, nearby residents of Alki and Golden Gardens Beaches, and all the City staff who contributed to improved user compliance, safer beaches, and cleaner air. And thank you, Ted, for getting it all started!



2005 Beach Fire Staff

### Top 10 Conservation Tips

1. Turn off your computer and monitor when you leave every day.
2. Turn off printers, copy machines, and fax machines every day.
3. Turn off the lights in empty rooms.
4. Keep heat in by closing doors and windows.
5. Use water efficiently—don't let it run unless you're using it.
6. Report leaks as soon as you notice them.
7. Unplug your water cooler at night.
8. Don't use personal heaters at work.
9. Recycle everything possible.
10. Generate less trash.



BMP Trainer Becca Fong at a recent workshop

## Best Management Practices

**C**lose your eyes and imagine, if you will, a learning environment where new information is presented with attention to your learning style, lots of time for questions and discussion, and the occasional hilarious, somewhat embarrassing, and endearing story of learning our work the hard way. Believe it or not, this is real and it's our own homegrown program for teaching all our resource maintenance staff Best Management Practices for Landscape, Horticulture and Forestry (BMPs).

In 1999, Parks printed its first ever manual of BMPs. In 2005, more than 60 Parks staff came together to revise the manual and distribute it to all our grounds maintenance work units, and 18 more people stepped up to develop training programs based on those revisions. These talented and experienced staff came from Parks Resources, Shops, Horticulture, and Environmental Learning Centers to develop our new state of the art BMP training program in core areas of our park maintenance work.

To date, all our lead landscape staff have attended half-day or full day trainings in Natural Areas, Trees, Turf, Irrigation, and Construction Site Management. The program is set up to be repeated on alternate years for new staff or as refreshers for all staff, which will make sure we get regular updates on the best available information on landscape management and environmental stewardship practices.

BMPs will also improve our efficiency without sacrificing customer service, and will ensure consistent dedication of resources across the city. Look for more training tools coming soon, such as BMP cards. These laminated cards will be distributed to each work unit to guide staff in some of our core maintenance tasks. These easy-to-read, illustrated guides such as "6 steps for planting a tree" or "5 ways to protect trees during construction" will soon appear in each district.

Will this program succeed in ensuring better resource maintenance and environmental performance? It's already happening. Districts across Parks are already seeing better attention to the key elements and values of the BMPs and taking advantage of the roadmap the manual lays out for our everyday work. In the words of Michele Lavin, who reflects the thoughts of her peer BMP trainers, "If you don't remember it all, you can always find it in the BMPs."

## Green Seattle Going Strong

**2005** was an exciting and productive year for the Green Seattle Partnership. Through our partnership with the Cascade Land Conservancy and our EarthCorps Community Outreach program, Green Seattle hosted more than 75 volunteer events across the city and removed 10 acres of invasive plants from forested park lands and planted 2,200 native trees and shrubs.

In October, we also brought together an exceptional group of 25 restoration volunteers for the first bi-annual Forest Stewards Training. Forest stewards walked away with a better understanding of the scale of our invasive plant problem across the City, and a new appreciation for how their important work

contributes to our goal to clear 2,500 acres of invasive plants by 2025.

In the coming months you will see field guides (consistent with our BMPs) in the hands of staff and volunteers alike that will help guide and monitor restoration efforts. We will soon unveil the Green Seattle Partnership 20 Year Strategic Plan, which will include fund raising efforts and an outreach plan that will inform the public and staff on how we plan to restore 2,500 acres of park land in 20 years. The Plan can soon be found online at [www.greenseattle.org](http://www.greenseattle.org). Please call Katie Moller, Parks Urban Forester, for more information at (206) 233-5019.

## Paper Cuts Report Card

**E**arly last year, Mayor Nickels signed an Executive Order directing all city staff to reduce paper use by 15% in 2005 and an additional 15% in 2006. This "PaperCuts" initiative also directed staff to purchase all paper (100% recycled) from the city warehouse and to increase recycling of the paper we use. The goals were set to reduce the almost 74 million sheets of paper used by the City each year, and to reduce the environmental impacts of paper production.

For the first nine months of the campaign, City paper use overall was down 12%. In Parks, we compared those who purchased from the City warehouse in 2004 and 2005, and use is down by 18%. A very good job!

So what's next? We will keep working with all work units and sites, and we'll focus extra attention on the work units that use the most paper. We will continue to monitor the "Best Paper Use Practices" we established last year, such as mandating double sided printing and copying where possible, and storing more files electronically. We will also further reduce the size of some standard forms and eliminate paper reporting altogether when possible. How's your work group doing? Here are some more impressive reductions by unit: Superintendent, 60%; Budget, 90%; Accounting, 38%; Fleets and Telecommunications (purchases for 100 Dexter), 29%; Aquarium, 6%; Jefferson Community Center, 39%; Magnolia Community Center, 60%; South Lake Union Park, 29%; Seattle Conservation Corps, 24%; Athletics, 38%; Planning and Development Division, 23%; and Real Estate, 33%.

In 2006, we will need to continue these new ways of doing business in order to meet the second half of the goal of 30% over two years. With all the good people and great ideas in the department, we can achieve this new goal. For more tips and ideas to help you save paper in 2006, please visit the web at [www.seattle.gov/papercuts](http://www.seattle.gov/papercuts).



Walking Our Talk is published three times a year for the employees of Seattle Parks and Recreation. Our goal is to inspire us all by highlighting the people and programs that make Seattle Parks a leader in environmental stewardship. We welcome your input — please send us story ideas, kudos, anecdotes, and photos about activities you or your co-workers are doing to help make our urban environment healthier. Ideas or questions? Contact us at [parkses@seattle.gov](mailto:parkses@seattle.gov), or call Leila Wilke at 206/233-3712.

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